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ART. V.—AN EPISODE IN MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT.

I. THE RING.

WITHIN the last eight years there have from time to time appeared in the pages of this Review a series of articles, which have attracted an unusual degree of public attention, and which there is some reason to believe will be found hereafter to possess a more than ordinary historical value. The first of these articles appeared in the "North American" for October, 1866, and described the government of the city of New York as it then existed. Next, in the July number for 1867, was a paper on "The New York City Judiciary." In July, 1869, and in April, 1871, the proceedings of the band of robbers who had secured temporary possession of the Erie Railway were described in detail; and in the issue last referred to there was also a paper relating to the course of certain members of the New York bar in these latter transactions. Disconnected with each other, prepared by different hands wholly without consultation, these several papers all related to different phases of one and the same subject-matter. Nor was the interest excited by them in any respect matter of surprise; for of the many interesting problems, social, political, and financial, which now engage the attention of thoughtful Americans, none are more interesting than those which arise out of our attempt to rule large cities through a government republican in form, and out of the tendency of great corporate powers to become weapons of pillage in the hands of unscrupulous men. All roads lead to Rome, and these two different phases of social evolution in America result in the same thing; whether emanating from Wall Street or from Tammany Hall, whether directed at the City Hall or at the management of the Erie Railway, whether seeking a fulcrum in the corner groceries and engine-rooms of the Bowery or in the brokers' offices of Broad Street, whether directing a proletariat or effecting a "corner,"—the end in view is always the control of some corporate power, municipal or commercial, by certain conspirators whose object is plunder. In the slang of the day, these men constitute the "rings"

which play so large a part in our financial and political operations. The New York City government Ring has undoubtedly been the most famous of these combinations, for it welded together the ignorant and corrupt voting masses of the largest city of the New World into a tremendous engine for political burglary ; and yet it is a fact worthy of remark, that as recently as 1866, when the article on the New York City government appeared in this Review, the author of that paper made no allusion whatever to the existence of any thoroughly organized ring in municipal politics, nor is there any reason to suppose that such a one was then in existence. The material was ready, the men were ready, — the moment had not yet come. It came at last, however, and resulted in what there is good reason to suppose will long be regarded as one of the most dramatic episodes in modern history.

Most of the men who played the prominent parts in this drama were, it is true, very low, coarse, brutal beings ; but the stage upon which they performed was a prominent one, and their operations were upon a sufficiently large scale. In this, and in one or more succeeding articles, it is proposed to review the characters of those who composed the gang, some of the proceedings of their reign, and the incidents of their downfall. In their day these subjects were sufficiently discussed, but they have yet to take their place in history, and that place will be a prominent one.

Meanwhile little remains to be said preliminary to the introduction upon the scene of those who made up the famous Ring government. The social and political conditions which rendered their rule possible have already been sufficiently described in the articles in this Review already referred to. It would be little better than tedious iteration to again go over that ground, describing the various steps through which the government, the bench, the bar, and the exchange of New York City gradually became what Tweed, Sweeny, Hall, and Connolly found them in 1868. These men constituted the " Ring " ; and through thirty years events seemed to have conspired to bring them together, and to happily adjust them to each other and to surrounding circumstances. They were, indeed, the ripe, consummate flower of New York City politics. Not that in

most respects they bore any strong degree of resemblance one to another, — on the contrary, they were curiously dissimilar, differing not less in social standing than in education and in ability. In fact, the one sole link which ultimately bound them together seems to have been self-interest of the most sordid kind, as it was their common pursuit of politics in the same city which originally brought them in contact. Each needed the others' help in his schemes of ambition or profit, but all were ready to abandon or sacrifice their associates whenever circumstances seemed to render such a course expedient.

The oldest and chief of the four stands out before the rest in Falstaffian proportions. William Marcy Tweed was born in 1823 in the city of New York, at No. 24 Cherry Street. This locality, now notorious for its dance-houses, "bucket-shops," and sailor boarding-houses, with a criminal record second to no other in New York, was then occupied by the dwellings of the most respectable and well-to-do citizens. The Tweed family were essentially of this class, — plain, respectable people. The father was of Scotch blood, but born in New York, where he worked at his trade of chair-making until he had saved sufficient capital to set up as a manufacturer on his own account. He afterwards became a partner in a brush-making firm, and retired from business with a competence. He was a "clever, decent old gentleman," in the phrase of a neighbor, against whose good name no word of reproach was spoken. His wife, who was born on Long Island, possessed uncommon energy and independence, and was an excellent housekeeper. Her son William apparently inherited more of her characteristics than of those of his father. He was always her favorite, and it would seem was somewhat a spoilt child. Educational opportunities were limited in those days. William and his brother Richard were put to work in their father's shop at an early age, and it was not until the former was well grown that he received any schooling. He proved but a bungling apprentice. He lacked mechanical skill, and handled his tools clumsily, "to the damage both of his work and his fingers." Yet he seems to have shown some capacity, for a saddlery and hardware dealer obtained his release from his father and made

him a clerk and salesman. After a year of this work William became ambitious to be a book-keeper, and, feeling his own ignorance, he went to a private academy at Elizabeth, N. J., kept by a clergyman. Here he became a fair penman and a ready reckoner. In after years he was always remarkable for quickness at figures and for the ease with which he could mentally go through complicated calculations.

Returning to business, William served as a tobacconist's clerk for two years. When at the age of sixteen, he was engaged as salesman by D. Berrian & Co., brush-makers, the firm in which his father was a partner. The latter in time retired, leaving his interest to his son, who became junior partner. He remained in this business for several years, and at the age of twenty-eight he and his brother Richard started on their own account as chair manufacturers. Old Mr. Tweed aided them liberally with his credit, and their prospects looked bright; yet, though the new firm did a large trade, they finally became bankrupt, with a deficit of \$200,000. The aged father was involved in their ruin. He had become security for his sons to an unlimited extent, and all accounts agree that they abused his confidence. The provision which he had laboriously accumulated for his declining years was exhausted in paying the firm's debts, and old Mr. Tweed, to earn a living, was forced to resume in a small way the occupation of chair-making. The shock of this calamity broke his heart, and it was not long before he fell dead in a fit of apoplexy in his own house. He had never forgiven his sons for their conduct, and was alienated from both of them at the time of his death. It had been the old story with the young firm, and their bankruptcy was due to neglect of their regular business and to a haste to get rich rapidly through speculation in stocks. Richard gambled, also, while William devoted altogether too much time to matters which had little connection with either the making or selling of chairs. His attention was, in fact, already mainly taken up with firemen's affairs and ward politics. He first joined a hose company, and later took part in the organization of "Americus" engine No. 6, afterwards known as "Big Six," of which he ultimately became foreman.

The New York fire department at that date was a volunteer

organization, and played a very important part in city politics. A large portion of the force were respectable men, some of whom had joined it from a sense of duty, while others sought in this way to escape militia and jury service. They were all men in good physical condition, and among them were many companionable fellows, who made their business and social meetings very enjoyable. In fact, the engine-houses were in many cases a kind of club-room, where the members spent their leisure hours, and found abundant amusement, if not always of the most improving description. Added to this was the excitement of running to fires, combined with the rivalry between different companies, which led to bitter feuds and frequent fights. Lastly there were the holiday parades, target excursions, and the reception of firemen visitors from other cities. The latter were treated with a lavish hospitality, and no expense was spared in their entertainment. This school of experience produced a peculiar and now well understood type of character, of which Mr. Chanfrau's creation "Mose" may be accepted as an exemplar. Generosity, clannishness, reckless courage, improvidence, love of excitement, and the use of a most ingeniously complicated slang distinguished the class, who were the outgrowth of the times, but who are now a tradition.

Tweed was well fitted to be a popular foreman. His growing corpulency unfitted him for physical activity, but he was full of mental energy. "Big Six" company was made up of two divisions, respectively known in firemen's vernacular as "Quills" and "Roughs." The former included all the respectable members, who were mostly clerks; hence their nickname. These were in the minority to the "Roughs," who, instigated by Tweed, constantly indulged in disorderly conduct, in spite of the opposition of the "Quills." On one occasion Tweed was summoned before the Fire Commissioners for throwing obstructions in the way of a rival engine so that it should not reach a fire before his own, and he barely escaped removal. Under his leadership the "Americus" became notorious throughout the city, and its foreman, who was always known as "Big Six," was looked up to with admiration by the entire "b'hoy" element. He himself yielded readily enough

to the moulding influences of the life, and acquired certain peculiarities which he always afterwards retained,—such as a swaggering gait, free-and-easy manners, the constant use of slang, and the display of a coarse humor greatly in vogue among his firemen associates. At this time he was a tall overgrown man, full of animal spirits. He talked much and with a spluttering volubility that made it hard to understand him. He was fond of display, and liked to be foremost. He had a genius for making friends, but he always preferred the society of his inferiors. What he lacked in courage he made up in bluster, though he yielded before courageous opposition. He was loyal to his friends, and had the reputation of helping every one when he could. He at one period was a deep drinker, but by the positive order of his physician he had stopped his excesses in this respect, and with fatherly interest advised young men of his acquaintance to be temperate and virtuous. Nevertheless, with too common inconsistency, he was notorious, even from his youth, for licentious excesses, which were a scandal to the neighborhood in which he dwelt, and which grew upon him in after years.

It was not until after his failure in business that Tweed's ambition turned toward political advancement. The shortest road to this goal lay through his connection with the fire department, and to the development of that he bent all his energies. The tide of emigration had at this time just begun to set strongly from Europe to the United States, and with the consequent growth of New York and the rapid influx of Irish and Germans into the lower wards of the city, the well-to-do residents began to move up town. The change soon caused a transfer of political power in Tweed's district from the respectable and honorable men who had previously held office, to the adventurous city demagogues of that peculiar half-foreign, half-American type, with which New York has since been so sadly familiar, and among whom Tweed was from the first prominent. He now abandoned all thought of business, and turned his attention wholly to politics, as a means of livelihood. His first advancement to any political office was his election as Alderman in 1850, after being defeated as a candidate for Assistant Alderman in 1844. Among his associates

in the Board were a few men of some mark, of whom Daniel F. Tiemann, afterwards Mayor, was one ; but the bulk of the Common Council were so notoriously corrupt that from their number they received the *sobriquet* of the "Forty Thieves," and certainly their acts justified the name. A richer crop of frauds and jobs, among which ferry leases, street improvements, and gas contracts were most abundant and lucrative, had never before sprung from that prolific soil. Tweed showed a native aptitude for his new vocation ; at first, and for a short time, he simply co-operated in the schemes of plunder, but it was not long before he took the lead and held it. He always made a great display of his knowledge of parliamentary law, and was continually raising points of order at the meetings of the Board ; but he also served on several committees, and, like a true politician, almost every measure which he introduced was calculated either to oblige old friends or to make new ones. They all "had money in 'em." Now it was an act to supply or repair public offices, to pave the streets, or to raise salaries. Again, the markets needed repairing, or money was voted to place street lamps in front of churches, to liquidate extra election bills, or to supply music in the public parks. He presented innumerable petitions praying for personal relief from the city treasury : a laborer had been hurt on the public works ; or extra pay was to be allowed David J. Valentine for his services upon that veteran job, the Corporation Manual ; or the veterans of the Mexican war were to be assisted. The interests of the firemen of course received his special attention, and through his instrumentality a new engine-house was voted to that "Big Six," which he loved so well and which had helped him so much. At the Henry Clay obsequies, in 1852, Tweed was chairman of the committee appointed by the Common Council to draft resolutions of respect, and on presenting these he made one of the few set speeches of his career, which has fortunately been preserved in full for the benefit of posterity. It is a somewhat singular effort, abounding in high-flown rhetoric and extravagant eulogy of the deceased statesman, mixed with egotistical references to the speaker himself, who more than intimated that the vacancy they were then called upon to deplore could be easily filled by

himself or by one of his associates. This appropriate climax to Tweed's Aldermanic career was, after the fashion of New York City politics, followed by an anti-climax thoroughly characteristic and ludicrous. The entire Common Council was arrested and imprisoned for contempt of court in granting to certain parties a charter to lay down a street railway in Broadway in flagrant disregard of an injunction restraining them from so doing. Judge Duer, who upon this occasion represented the outraged majesty of the law, sentenced Alderman Sturtevant, who framed and moved the resolution granting the charter, to fifteen days' imprisonment and a fine of \$250, while two other Aldermen and ten Assistant Aldermen were mulcted in similar penalties, though they escaped the durance vile.

Tweed's experience in the Common Council had now whetted his appetite for public office. While Alderman he had considerably bettered his damaged fortunes, so that, on retiring to private life, he possessed the means of gratifying his new ambition. This now turned towards Washington. He accordingly sought and obtained a Congressional nomination, and was duly elected, partly through the aid of the negro vote. Though he took some share in the business of the House of Representatives, he naturally failed to make any mark in it; in fact, he was almost as much out of his element as was Mr. John Morrissey a few years later, and he soon came to the wise conclusion that Washington was no place for him. He took no part in the debates, excepting on one occasion, when he made a short and incoherent speech in favor of the Kansas and Nebraska bill, then the subject of heated discussion in Congress. He afterwards prepared an elaborate effort on the same topic, which fills several columns of the "Globe," though it was certainly never delivered, if indeed it was ever written by him. It was, like so many similar productions, intended simply for home consumption. Copies of it, in pamphlet form, were accordingly widely distributed among his constituents, and such of them as could read were doubtless duly impressed thereby with the eminent public services of their representative.

If common report is to be believed, Tweed more than occa-

sionally sought relief from the cares of public life in the somewhat coarse dissipations of Washington, and even allowed himself to be fleeced by sharpers. He thus in due time came back to New York, and the more congenial associations of "Big Six," a species of prodigal son,—almost penniless, and thoroughly disgusted with life at the national capital. His fortunes did not revive rapidly. His Congressional career had not advanced his reputation, and he now lacked that prime element of political power in New York,—money. All that the great dispenser of future city patronage, the embryotic Commissioner of Public Works, had at this time to depend on were such stray jobs as he could pick up, and he found it not always an easy task to keep the sheriff from his door. His buoyant spirits, however, prevented him from despairing, while a few stanch friends, who still believed in him and his fortunes, helped him along. In 1857 he again got into office; this time in the educational department,—becoming a Public-school Commissioner. In this sphere of usefulness the record naturally shows that he was very active in proposing to vote money away to pay for school sites, to make repairs, and to supply furniture; in which liberality of expenditure he doubtless found his own account. But with money came promotion. In November of this year Tweed was chosen a member of the Board of Supervisors; but of the six candidates elected he received the least number of votes even in his own district, which does not seem to imply any great degree of personal popularity. At this election, too, other notabilities of the future put in an appearance; for George G. Barnard was chosen Recorder, and Peter B. Sweeny District Attorney. Though the Board of Supervisors had been created in 1846, and its principal functions were "to settle, examine, and allow all accounts chargeable against the city and county," these duties had always been performed, except in special cases, by the Mayor, Recorder, and Aldermen. Up to the time of Tweed's election, the position of Supervisor had been, therefore, of small importance. By a special statute of the Legislature, however, passed in 1857, the Mayor and Recorder ceased to be members of the Board. The power of the twelve Supervisors proper was greatly enlarged by this change, which gave

them ample facilities for the manipulation of every variety of profitable job with little danger of detection. This was a city politician's paradise, and among the well-known names of Tweed's associates, few, indeed, call up any lofty ideal of scrupulous integrity. In spite of the complaints of the press, and the attempts at interference by Mayor Opdyke, many measures of a most doubtful character were carried through the Board. Tweed was its ruling spirit, and was four times elected its President. From this period he began to be a power in New York politics. Heretofore his influence and reputation had both been local, and outside of his district he had hardly been known at all. Now his sphere of action embraced the whole city, and his large figure began to loom up in portentous magnitude through the foul miasma of municipal politics.

Leaving here the great central figure of the drama, it is now proper to sketch the previous career of the lesser performers — Sweeny, Hall, and Connolly — with whom Tweed at this point in his career began to affiliate, and with whom he naturally and speedily formed a close alliance.

Peter B. Sweeny, by studiously keeping aloof from the vulgar crowd, and employing secret methods to accomplish his ends, succeeded in throwing a mysterious glamour around his name, by means of which he created an exaggerated impression of his abilities. He essayed the "grand, gloomy, and peculiar" rôle on the political stage. New York politics have long developed a peculiar type of men who wielded vast authority without assuming official honors, and who loved to be obscure while swaying the destinies of parties. Dean Richmond, Thurlow Weed, and Peter B. Sweeny, though very different in other respects, all exhibited this trait of character, nor did the type originate with them. The last of these three was the successor of Dean Richmond and the pupil of Weed; he surpassed both for a brief space in the extent of his influence, though he equalled neither as a political manager.

He was born in New York about 1824, of Irish parentage. The Sweeny family were of low degree, though some of them had been Catholic priests. It is reported that the mother of the future Tammany "Squire" kept a liquor store

in the Sixth Ward, and attended to the wants of customers while nursing her infant. However this may have been, it is a fact that Sweeny's father had a cheap tavern in the outskirts of Jersey City, much frequented by Irish visitors from New York, and where young Sweeny when a boy acted as waiter. The family connections, including Sweeny's uncle and his future brother-in-law, were largely in the livery business. He was early sent to St. Peter's Roman Catholic parochial school in Barclay Street, and subsequently, it is said, to Columbia College. He chose the law for his profession, and entered the office of James T. Brady, where he proved himself a close student. His talents caused him to be respected, but, owing to a morose disposition, he was not generally popular. Though he nominally entered on the practice of his profession, he gave his most earnest attention to the political advancement of his uncle, Thomas J. Barr, and when, in 1854, the latter was elected State Senator he took young Sweeny with him to Albany, where he became a lobbyist. In this capacity he acted as the agent of some of the principal New York stage companies, opposing on their behalf the chartering of any street railways detrimental to their interests. He remained in Albany during the sessions of the Legislature, and pursued his profession during the adjournments, thus dividing his time about equally between the lobby and the law. A master in the art of persuasion, he soon became influential as a wire-puller and negotiator. By his forethought and sagacity he made himself useful to that large class of men who are unable to originate schemes themselves, though abundantly capable of carrying out the plans of others. Tweed was essentially one of this class, and Sweeny was soon brought into close relations with him, ultimately becoming his adviser and ally. He derived no small advantage from the fact that he had been a student in the law office of James T. Brady; for the name of Brady had a potent charm with the Irish, so much so that a Republican candidate was once elected by Democratic votes merely because he bore it. In 1858 Sweeny was chosen District Attorney, but on the trial of his first case he broke down from lack of self-possession, and presently resigned. The only other offices which he held were those of City Chamberlain and Central Park Commissioner,

neither of which brought him into great public prominence ; but in the former capacity he acquired a useful though fictitious reputation by ostentatiously accounting for the interest on such public funds as were temporarily accumulated in his hands, — a practice which had apparently not been in vogue with his predecessors.

His relations to the Ring he himself described as follows : “ I am not, and never claimed to be, a leader. Tweed . . . Mayor Hall, Comptroller Connolly, and others I might name, are more leaders than I am. I am a sort of adviser ; I try to harmonize the interests of the party, and endeavor to secure good nominations and sound principles, as I understand them. But I do not aspire to the position of a leader. I am simply a passenger in the ship, with the privilege of going ashore if I do not like its management or its course.” But none the less in Sweeny’s case, as in that of Paul Jones in Cooper’s tale of the “ Pilot,” the “ passenger ” was supreme. No one knew this better than Sweeny himself, though for policy’s sake he spread abroad a different impression.

Sweeny was well read in law, history, and political science. He was familiar with general literature, and, though not a man of culture, he had a taste for fine engravings and other works of art. As a writer he was effective, though ungraceful ; better at suggesting ideas to others than at formulating them himself. In private he could talk forcibly and freely, but in public he was taciturn and even forbidding ; he was, indeed, wholly devoid of popular traits. Few persons liked him, nor had he any body-guard of admirers such as always clustered about Tweed. Neither had he any direct influence on men in masses, though he controlled caucuses unseen, and from the committee-room guided conventions. He had a remarkable faculty for estimating the local strength of any politician, and this enabled him accurately to weigh and balance opposing forces in a canvass. He showed uncommon skill in settling disputes and effecting compromises, always conceding anything to silence dangerous opposition or to gain over the disaffected, though at heart he was a good hater, and his uncompromising enmities were a prime cause of the ruin of the Ring. He was scrupulous about keeping his word, nor did he practise petty

trickery like Connolly ; at least, if he did, he was careful not to criminate himself, and was skilful in the use of others as cat's-paws to attain his end. He became very wealthy, and a part of his property was undoubtedly acquired by real-estate speculations, based upon his knowledge of proposed improvements ; yet there can be little doubt, as will be fully demonstrated hereafter, that Sweeny also received a share of the sums stolen by the Ring, though he was sufficiently sagacious to conceal the legal proofs of his complicity in those colossal thefts.

His personal appearance was not prepossessing. He had a stunted figure, heavy sinister features, a low forehead, coarse black hair and mustache, and deep, penetrating eyes ; a type of face common enough in the West of Ireland, near Galway, where the Celtic and Iberian stocks are mixed, and where Sweeny's ancestors belonged. He lived without ostentation, but handsomely, and, although naturally a gross eater, as he suffered from chronic dyspepsia his habits were necessarily abstemious. He shrank from publicity, and sought side streets rather than the thoroughfares. In fine, he was a man of vigorous but sullen nature, always absorbed in plotting mischief, and in his passion for power swaying the actions of those whom he disliked, and who in turn felt an aversion for him. He greatly admired Napoleon the Third, with whom he was slightly acquainted, and whom he resembled in his vast ambition, his propensity to plot, and his incapacity to meet great emergencies when they suddenly presented themselves. Both were of short stature and contemplative by nature. Each sought to gain his ends by employing unscrupulous instruments, and both were ruined by the very men whom they had virtually created.

Next in prominence to Sweeny, stands A. Oakey Hall, — "O. K.," as the wretched punster loved to sign himself, even to official papers. The life of this individual presents strange vicissitudes. During his checkered career he has played the part of lawyer, *littérateur*, journalist, politician, dramatist, lecturer, and office-holder, each with unfailing readiness, and even with a certain degree of success. A native of New York, Hall was of a good family, claiming descent from one of Cromwell's

colonels. At college he was described as "a sharp, black-headed young man, quick, ready, and always in the foreground." He certainly showed versatility enough, for after graduating from the New York University, where he was proficient in the classics, he entered the Harvard Law School for a time, but subsequently went to New Orleans and became a newspaper reporter. Soon afterwards he entered the law office of Mr. Slidell, of "Trent" fame. He remained there some time, and then, returning to New York, tried his hand at authorship, but soon wearied of that, and turned toward politics as promising richer rewards than anything he had yet undertaken. About 1854 Hall appeared in the lobby of the Assembly at Albany almost at the same time with Sweeny, and began practice as a member of the third house. He was a Republican, while Sweeny was a Democrat, and as the latter was most interested in looking after the interests of his patrons, the stage proprietors, Hall was instrumental in drafting the Police Bill, which was the precursor of almost all of the large and noxious brood of metropolitan Commissions. Sweeny was the more sagacious of the two, but Hall excelled him in audacity and in practical skill at devising ways and means.

Hall was appointed Assistant District Attorney by Nathaniel B. Blunt, and upon the death of the latter became acting District Attorney. To his credit it should be said that he performed Mr. Blunt's duties, and gave the salary of the office to his widow, while he also undertook the charge of educating his benefactor's children. In 1862 he was regularly elected District Attorney, through a combination of Republicans with the "Mozart Hall" wing of the Democracy. His opponent, Chauncey Shaffer, was a "Know-Nothing," and owing to this fact Hall succeeded, though a Republican, in carrying the Sixth Ward,—an unprecedented performance. As a lawyer, Hall was shrewd, ingenious, and full of devices, but fond of theatrical display, and but a shallow reasoner. The most famous case in which he was ever officially concerned was the trial of Mrs. Cunningham for the murder of Dr. Burdell, in Bond Street,—a case which at the time created a great sensation, and in which Mr. District Attorney Hall made himself rather absurdly prominent.

The office of District Attorney is one of importance and honor. Charles O'Connor and several other leading lawyers have performed its duties. Hall was familiar with the routine of business, and had many advantages for filling the position, in which he made many friends, who afterwards became serviceable to him. It was customary at that time, whenever a police-officer was needed by the District Attorney, to send a requisition to the nearest station in the Sixth Ward. Matthew T. Brennan, afterwards sheriff, was then captain there, while Joseph Dowling, afterwards police justice, and John Clancy, editor of the "Leader," were patrolmen. With these men Hall became intimate. He also enlarged his circle of acquaintance in other directions, as his official position from time to time gave him special opportunities for making himself influential. He himself, in one of his punning remarks, revealed the secret of his political power. "Few persons," he said, "have so many *tried* friends as I have, and tried friends are always magnanimous." An unscrupulous medical practitioner may easily obtain a certain degree of mastery over his patients; but the criminal administrator who knows the history of thousands of men's misdeeds wields a far more terrible power. Whether Hall took improper advantage of this ascendancy cannot be proved. By common report, it had been the practice of his predecessors in office to do so, and it has been publicly charged that under Hall's administration no less than ten thousand indictments against various persons were "pigeon-holed," while they were allowed to go at large. This, however, was mere assertion, though widely believed at the time, and it was evidently extravagant, as during the fifteen years, up to 1874, the total number of indictments filed did not much exceed nineteen thousand. On the other hand, Hall himself, with characteristic boldness, said, in a public speech in 1868, that there were ten thousand indictments against liquor-dealers on file at the District Attorney's office under the Excise law which he did not mean to try. It seems not unreasonable to suppose that if one class of indictments was withheld, others may have been. While acting as District Attorney, Hall was also a member of the law firm of Brown, Hall, & Vanderpool, who through his exertions were made official attorneys of the Board of Police. Their fees in

this capacity were commonly supposed to have been large, but by special arrangement they at first amounted to only \$5,000 per annum, and afterwards to \$7,000. The connection, however, naturally led to reputation and outside practice. The firm were also counsel to the Sheriff, which brought them in heavy fees, while they afterwards gained much additional practice through the influence of the Ring. Thus, even before Hall became Mayor, he had already amassed what, for a man of his Bohemian character, was a handsome property.

While Hall's position caused him to be feared, his personal qualities made him popular. By birth and breeding he was a gentleman, and he had also cultivated to a high degree the social arts and graces, so that he was a lively and agreeable talker, with excellent address, and a faculty for adapting himself to any company. His ambition was twofold, — he craved literary and social success. He once said that he would rather be editor of a great paper like the "Herald" than Governor of New York, or even President of the United States; but as a writer he was only clever, sprightly, by his own account "diffuse," with a leaning toward *persiflage* and puns. His first literary efforts were stories and book reviews in "Harper's Magazine," which were well received at the time, though now forgotten. He published two volumes, one of light sketches, and the other a Christmas story, in which a lobbyist appears as a leading character. He afterwards became dramatic critic, and finally literary editor, of the "Leader," a weekly journal, which was at once the organ of the reigning political dynasty in New York, and also a vehicle for publishing the effusions of the so-called Bohemian circle, which comprised many rather brilliant young writers, some of whom have since enjoyed an ephemeral popularity and even fame. At first Hall was only a *feuilleton* writer, and contributed sprightly criticisms under the signature of O'Halloran. Eventually, however, he took a larger share in the management of the paper, and at length became sole editor. At the same time, through his social connections, he became intimate with James Gordon Bennett, Jr., and began to write for the "Herald."

One is tempted to sum up Hall's character in the terse term of "joking cheat," applied to him by Horace Greeley, in one of

his scornful moods. Bacon, in his essay on "Advancement in Life," quotes the Italian proverb that in order to be successful a man should be a little of a fool. Hall is a proof of the soundness of this saying. His buffoonery and cheap wit have helped him hide his inner and more serious nature. Under the mask of a vivacious and inoffensive Bohemian he concealed a soaring ambition. Like Macaulay's *bête noire* Barrère, Hall was a clever writer and speaker, with a tendency to bombast. The relations of each to his associates were similar. They were both adroit and useful tools, if directed by stronger minds. Barrère was managed by Robespierre and Danton, and Hall by Tweed and Sweeny, while both were skilful enough to evade the ruin which befell their masters.

Very different in all respects from the "smart" and versatile American Hall, was the Irish Connolly, his next immediate associate. Richard B. Connolly was born at Banta, near Cork, and was the son of an Irish schoolmaster noted for his superior address and for his luck in marrying an heiress. By a strange coincidence the family crest is a mailed hand holding an annulet or Ring, with the pious motto "*En Dieu est tout.*" His father gave him a fair education, but he emigrated early, and while yet a youth came to Philadelphia, where he was taken into an auctioneer's office. From Philadelphia he removed to New York, and after acting some time as clerk with a prominent auctioneer, he obtained an appointment in the Custom-House during the collectorship of Jesse Hoyt. This he retained for some years, and until he became discount clerk in the Bank of North America, of which Mayor Havemeyer was president. In all these situations he showed skill as an accountant, and performed his duties creditably. His manners were good, though somewhat elaborate, with a decided tinge of obsequiousness toward his superiors and arrogance to his inferiors. His professions were early distrusted, and he was nicknamed "Slippery Dick," a *sobriquet* which clung to him. It was not long after removing to New York that Connolly took up his residence in the Seventh Ward, and with true Irish proclivity began to dabble in politics. By currying favor with the Catholics he obtained their support, and through them gradually gained some local influence. Finally his ambition

was gratified by being made secretary of the ward committees ; but, though his neat penmanship was admired, he could not be trusted even to count votes after a ballot. In 1851 Connolly was chosen County Clerk by a small majority, and three years later he was re-elected. It is a curious fact that up to the date of his re-election he had never been naturalized. This was the case with many other aliens whose fathers had become citizens, and who supposed that by the same act they also were naturalized. The way in which the fact was elicited in Connolly's case affords a curious and somewhat vivid little picture of men and manners at a New York City election precinct. One Stephen H. Branch, the George Francis Train of that time, and a bitter personal and political enemy of Connolly's, had driven him into a false statement that he was a citizen, and then took advantage of an election day to try and force him, through a challenge at the polls, to produce his papers. The polls in Connolly's district were held in a tailor's shop, where the redoubtable Branch waited till sundown, having his meals brought to him and eating them from the tailor's bench, so as to be ready to challenge his alien adversary should he dare appear. With Connolly, however, then, as ever, discretion was the better part of valor. He made no attempt to exercise the sacred right of suffrage that day, and shortly after took out his naturalization papers. He had no capacity either as a speaker or writer ; neither was he a leader or an organizer : he was only fitted to be an accountant. In November, 1859, he was elected State Senator, and served two years. Finding politics, however, not sufficiently lucrative, he retired to private life and entered the Central National Bank as cashier and general manager, with an annual salary of ten thousand dollars. But in the mean time he had become prominent in the Tammany Society, and in 1868 he was chosen Comptroller, partly on account of his financial ability, but more from his political strength.

Connolly had few redeeming traits. He was cold, crafty, and cowardly, with a smooth, oily, insinuating manner. He had not an honest instinct in his nature. He lacked courage to carry through great frauds, but he was ready enough to follow the lead of bolder rogues. He was an uncertain friend

and a treacherous ally. No man gave more promises or broke them with less compunction. His strong affection for his wife and children seems to have been his sole redeeming trait, and with this exception his inner portrait is all shadow.

Such were the four men into whose hands the entire government of New York City was to pass in 1869, — the leaders of its proletariat, the component parts of its powerful municipal Ring. In the whole series of portraits it is wonderful how few features there are to attract, — how very, very little that was redeeming about them the rascals had. To sum them all up, we find in Tweed a political adventurer, with some ability, but of a gross, sordid nature; possessing remarkable popular traits combined with an energy which could be daunted neither by political hazard nor financial failure; a man who, himself corrupt by nature, assumed that all other men were equally corrupt. As compared to Tweed, Connolly seems a contemptible sneak-thief beside a resolute burglar. The latter was supple, oily, and Pecksniffian, but keen-witted, and always with an eye to personal advantage. Sweeny appears as the saturnine, spider-like miser of power; hating notoriety, and delighting to weave his toils in the dark; having implacable animosities, yet with self-control and tact to conciliate his worst foe, when by so doing he could effect an object. Lastly, Hall stands out with smirk and eye-glass, the harlequin trickster of the gang; careless of money, but with a craving for applause; loving social distinction, and yet descending to the lowest arts of the demagogue; a most versatile mountebank, doing many foolish acts, interspersed with a few wise ones, — at once an adroit political manager and a wretched punster; playing the opposite parts of fool and knave so skilfully that it is hard to tell which was nature and which was art.

But little has yet been said of the private morals of these men, but the lesson of their public deeds would be incomplete without some reference to them. Tweed was a monster of licentiousness, and his acts were as outrageously defiant as they were notorious. Hall's inner life will hardly bear close scrutiny. Connolly left Philadelphia owing to a low intrigue with a market-woman. Sweeny, though he was moderate in his appetites, kept as his mistress for years a former attendant in

a Turkish bath. The lesser members of the Ring imitated the private vices of their leaders as they copied their public crimes. Their inner lives were rotten to the core. In this respect they may best and most briefly be disposed of in the words of one who knew them well, "They were no better than beasts."

Besides the four who have now been described, other and hardly less notable men were included in the Ring. These, however, by themselves would have failed to accomplish the results arrived at under bolder leaders. It was by a process of natural selection that Tweed, Sweeny, Hall, and Connolly came together and took command. Already, when this happened, they had had frequent dealings together, sometimes of a friendly nature and sometimes not; to use the coarse but expressive fireman's metaphor, which would have sprung naturally to Tweed's lips, "Sometimes they bunked together, and sometimes they bucked together." They soon, however, became firmly leagued in the pursuit of the same brilliant prize, — the control of the municipal government and patronage of New York. Previously they had been operating on parallel lines; ultimately they formed a Ring, which possessed far greater strength and expansiveness.

It remains to describe the circumstances which brought them together, and the means through which they gained power. Under a different state of affairs it is possible that not one of the four would have come prominently before the world; but the times were ripe, and they were prompt to take advantage of them. The deterioration in the New York municipal government now dates back over fifty years, and is due to two causes,—the theoretic tinkering of political doctrinaires on the one hand, and the influx of an overwhelming flood of emigration, both vicious and ignorant, on the other. These topics have, however, heretofore been sufficiently dwelt upon in the pages of this Review,* and it is now only proposed to briefly recapitulate certain of the more immediate and superficial aspects of that social condition which rendered possible the supremacy of the Ring.

* No. CCXIII., October, 1866, pp. 413–465.

First and most prominent among these was the foreign element in the caucus and at the polls,—the proletariat of the city. Multitudes of the Irish and Germans who landed at New York remained there. These new-comers were ignorant, clannish, and easily controlled. Their moral sense had been blunted by ages of degradation, and they were as clay to the potter in the hands of the skilful and unscrupulous city demagogues. These last were quick to make bids for their support. Regardless of consistency, the men who had been prominent in the "Know Nothing" organization, including Tweed, Hall, and James Brooks, were foremost in securing political capital through cajolery of the Irish. In the mean time the better class of people more and more withdrew from active participation in public affairs. The majority were so absorbed in their private matters that they could hardly be induced even to vote, leaving the few honest men who had sufficient public spirit to attend primaries and supervise nominations to be driven to despair by the strength of the corruption they in vain struggled to resist, and the blind apathy of those whose interests they defended. Slowly but surely the direction of municipal affairs fell into the hands of professional politicians who depended upon office-holding for a livelihood, and who ultimately became so numerous that they could control the party machinery, and apportion the spoils of office. Each district had its local leader. This man was invariably a liquor-dealer or a fireman, or was engaged in some other light occupation. He had his gang of followers, mostly of the class familiarly known as "roughs" and loafers, who were ready for any service, such as distributing posters and tickets, packing primaries, walking in torchlight processions, or, if need be, "repeating" when elections were close. They were, in short, a very fair modern substitute for those bands of gladiators which played so prominent a part in the forum of the later Roman republic. For their services these men were rewarded either with direct pay or with a place on the city pay-roll. Scores of sinecure offices had necessarily to be created to make room for them, until the number of dependants on the city treasury became enormous. Their example attracted new recruits, for whom likewise new places had to be found, and thus there by

degrees grew up a loosely organized, yet powerful body, united for a common object, and careless of the means by which it was accomplished. Exactly how many persons were on the city pay-rolls during the supremacy of the Ring cannot be ascertained, but they were numbered by thousands. The Street Department gave employment to many hundreds; the Croton Board, Central Park Commission, and Sheriff had each also an army of retainers. Lastly, the Police Department employed several thousand men, while the Health and Excise Boards each had its list of dependants. Besides this legion in office there was another legion of outsiders,—the “outs” are always more numerous than the “ins.” For every occupied place there were at least two or three candidates who were eager to oust their more successful rivals. Like the daughters of the horse-leech, they cried, “Give, give,” and it was the utter impossibility of satisfying their rapacity which finally brought about the downfall of the Ring.

Here then was the great city, rich, growing, busy, careless of public affairs, and intent on accumulation and pleasure,—an easy prey for the spoiler. Here also was a voting population in which the vicious, the ignorant, and the destitute were in the majority. Between them and the government were ubiquitous little bands of lawless and desperate men, dependent on the city for support and eager for its plunder. The embryotic conspirators were already here and there throughout the city government,—it only remained for them to unite their forces. To do this effectually they required the absolute control of some one of those great party organizations,—those political engines for which New York has always been peculiar, which, strong in discipline and in tradition, always have and still do rule the city. Acting through this on the corner groceries and their bands of “roughs,” and thence directly down to the solid basis of the foreign votes, the secure plundering of the city treasury could be reduced to a certainty. The last step towards the establishment of the Ring lay therefore in the conquest of Tammany Hall; for Tammany Hall was not only one of the oldest political clubs in existence, but it was also the most influential in the city of New York. It deserves and will receive a history of its

own. It was founded a fortnight after Washington's first inauguration, and at a spot within the sound of his inaugural address. It has lasted through three generations, outliving numerous rival associations, and is still full of vitality. During that time it has "controlled the choice of at least one President, fixed the character of several national as well as State administrations, given pseudonymes to half a score of historical party organizations," and may truly be said to have shaped the destiny of the country at more than one decisive moment of its history. Though for the past twenty years it has never controlled an absolute majority of the votes in New York, it has still been master of that city. Its leaders have usually shown great sagacity in forecasting events and in availing themselves of circumstances. Their invariable policy has been to retain power by trafficking for it. Nor have they been at all particular with whom they dealt, whether with factions in their own party or with the common enemy; standing always ready, when no other course was open, to boldly purchase a way to the seat of authority. The charter of Tammany describes it as a charitable institution, and occasionally it has been made a means for helping the needy. It has also in its day experienced scientific aspirations, beginning a collection of objects relating to natural history, which was finally with exquisite propriety bought by P. T. Barnum, and formed the basis of his Museum; unhappily the fossil "war-horses" of Tammany formed no part of it. Its social features were at first most prominent, and its entertainments enjoyed great local celebrity. Politics, however, soon predominated over all other considerations, and Aaron Burr is traditionally held responsible for the change which converted it into a partisan institution. It was looked upon as a counter-weight to the Society of the Cincinnati, of which Burr's rival, Hamilton, was the guiding spirit; but it soon outstripped that short-lived body, and ultimately became the most potent political influence in the always intricate political action of the State and City of New York. The *personnel* of its membership was very high. Carefully avoiding any taint of aristocracy, it was always eminently respectable. It included among its members many of the most substantial citizens and leading

business men of the city. Its "sachems" were persons of property and standing. To be chairman or secretary of one of its meetings was an honor that any citizen felt proud of, and the closest discrimination was observed in the selection of candidates for office, especially in nominations for the Legislature.

It is unnecessary to relate the history of Tammany during the period from 1800 to 1860, or the contests and compromises in which it participated. It suffices to say that the Society retained most of its strength and respectability up to the time when Fernando Wood secured control of it, and, as its nominee, was elected Mayor. It then rapidly declined; the more respectable members resigning, until scarcely a corporal's guard of them remained. At last it fell under the control of local politicians, who, as a means of increasing their influence, admitted many of the most notoriously corrupt Common Councilmen as members of the General Committee. It was at this period that Sweeny and Tweed became prominent in its councils. Sweeny, who had participated in several of the many revolutions which had of late years taken place in the Democratic party, now bent his whole energies towards securing control of Tammany Hall, and his efforts were ultimately crowned with complete success. The constitution of Tammany is peculiar. It has a dual character. The Society is a distinct body from the General Committee, and owns the building known as Tammany Hall, which it leases to the General Committee. The fact that the latter meets at Tammany Hall makes it a "regular" organization, and the General Committee is greatly influenced by the Society; yet a man may be a member of the first body and not of the second. To belong to the Tammany Society has always been a great honor, and the most respectable men in the country are on its rolls; but it is otherwise with the General Committee, which is open to all. The Society is controlled by its sachems, whose will is supreme, and who retain all its property in their hands. There is thus a system of rings, the outermost, representing a constituency of many thousands, being entirely submissive to the innermost, consisting of scarcely a dozen persons. This arrangement was early adopted by the association, as in the first

publication of its laws it is declared, "The constitution of this Society shall consist of two parts, — the external, or public, and the internal, or private. The latter shall ever be subordinate to the former." Just the reverse is the case in practice, and thus the singular anomaly resulted, that a Society which claimed to be the head of the Democracy of the nation furnished in its history a remarkable example of centralization. By a series of rapid tactics Sweeny obtained control first of the General Committee, and then of the Society. The Society was thoroughly leavened by a liberal infusion from the General Committee. The members of the dynasty whose names have since become so terribly familiar were in the majority. A few respectable men, like John T. Hoffman, James T. Brady, Edward Cooper, and John Clancy, still ornamented the list, but as a whole it reads like the Newgate Calendar, and included William M. Tweed, Peter B. Sweeny, Terence Farley, Matthew T. Brennan, "Mike" and Richard B. Connolly, "Captain" Isaiah Rynders, and others of the same stamp. Through their votes, on the 1st of January, 1863, the date of the Proclamation of Emancipation, Tweed was made permanent chairman.

The next step was to elect a new set of sachems. The "Leader" anticipated this action in an article replete with the absurd aboriginal imagery which has always been used in connection with Tammany affairs. It asserted that the old chiefs had ruled the councils too long; they had become gorged with good things and grown fat; therefore it was time they should yield a share of the honors and of the warm seats beside the council-fires to the young braves, who were hungry, and who, having done most service on the war-path, well deserved to participate in the government of the tribe. This broad hint was quickly acted upon. On the 21st of April a new set of sachems was chosen, — "harmoniously," as the "Leader" took pains to explain. It also stated, without excusing the proceeding, that, owing to the great desire which was felt to make this change, the constitutional time for electing these officers had been "anticipated," doubtless to the entire satisfaction of the new sachems at least. These comprised, among others, Purdy, Brennan, Edward Cooper, Richard B. Connolly,

Sweeny, Nicholson, John Kelly, Delevan, Devlin, Douglass Taylor, and Isaac Bell. James B. Nicholson was chosen "Father of the Council," which the "Leader" mentioned as a great compliment to that gentleman. It, however, was only a sample of the way in which the Ring flattered respectable men by giving them empty honors, while its members kept the real power to themselves. E. F. Purdy replaced Nelson J. Waterbury, who was at discord with Sweeny, and "who was thus," said the "Leader," "specially invited to retire." Three months later Tweed was made Grand Sachem *vice* Purdy resigned, and he thus became the head both of the General Committee and of Tammany Society. This last act put the political machine in running order. "The Old Guard are now on the war-path," exclaimed the "Leader," with that odd confusion of language in which it frequently indulged. Tammany Hall was now thoroughly reorganized and a most potent engine in the hands of the fast-forming Ring. Everything was tending towards the result described by Sweeny a few years later in an interview with a "Herald" reporter. When asked in what the strength of Tammany Hall consisted, he then replied in the vilely exaggerated language in which the "New York Herald" type of man delights: "It is chiefly from the completeness of its organization and the thoroughness of its discipline. General McCook of Ohio remarked, the last time I saw him, that, next to the Roman army under Cæsar, the organization of Tammany Hall was the most thoroughly disciplined body that the world has seen. We have good discipline. . . . The organization moves with the precision of a well-regulated machine. Great vigilance is exercised to keep up its discipline." Much, however, still remained to be done, and first of all was the difficult task of harmonizing differences in the party. The bitter feud between Tammany and Mozart had long been both a scandal and a source of weakness. Every State convention was rent by contests for official recognition between the representatives of the rival factions. The newspapers were filled with the clamor of the contestants, while the longer the fight raged the more bitter it became. The "Leader" strove strenuously to allay the storm, and published many able articles showing the folly of continuing the interne-

cine war. With a happiness of nomenclature almost worthy of Carlyle it characterized Fernando Wood, the head of the Mozart faction, as a "Mephistopheles-Micawber," and vehemently denounced his "peace policy." Tammany should at least be credited with loyalty to the Union, — its own hall was used as a recruiting place, while one of its sachems fell at the head of his regiment in the field. The "Leader" declared that the "Peace party" was "an unmitigated political nuisance," and unceasingly opposed it. There were also other elements of strife between Tammany and Mozart, but Sweeny at last succeeded in removing, or at least neutralizing, them all, and so brought peace into the political camp. A compromise was effected. The inducements held out were all of a material nature, and on each side it was give and take. The spoils of office were shared according to the strength of the contending parties.

Early in the year the "Leader" had hinted that "the unfortunate division" in the party was to be healed by sending Fernando Wood to Congress, and the suggestion was now carried out. The ex-Mayor, who had become convinced that his opponents in Tammany were his superiors in strength, wisely withdrew from the contest, leaving the Ring masters of the field. The latter, on the other hand, were only too glad to get rid of so dangerous a foe, who, said the "Leader," "would in future be a faithful adherent to Tammany Hall." John Fox, who had shown signs of insubordination, was also conciliated by a seat in Congress, while Joseph Sutherland was nominated to the bench of the Supreme Court. The claims of Mozart being thus satisfied, Tammany remained to be considered.

The Recordership was now given to John T. Hoffman. But a still greater gain for the Ring was the accession to its ranks at this time of two invaluable adherents in the persons of A. Oakey Hall and Albert Cardozo. The former had begun his political life as a Republican, and had joined the Mozart movement in hopes of preferment. He was, however, by no means ambitious of finishing existence in a minority, and he was much too shrewd not to see that the Wood faction was passing into an eclipse. He had already once been chosen District At-

torney, and he wished a re-election. There was not the slightest hope of this under Republican or Mozart colors, and so, with the example of his chief before him, and under the persuasions of Sweeny, Hall went bodily over to the Ring. To quote the trenchant words of Horace Greeley in 1870, "at a time when there was no new phase of political affairs and absolutely nothing in either national or State politics to call for or explain it, Mr. Hall became a Tammany Democrat; betraying alike Republicans and Mozart Democrats. He promptly got office thereby, and has kept in office ever since." Nor was the reward of his tergiversation confined to an immediate re-election to the District Attorneyship. These men did nothing by halves. No sooner had Hall turned his coat than his new associates at once admitted him to their inmost councils; while he, in grateful acknowledgment, at once began to make himself very useful to them in many ways. Albert Cardozo, the other acquisition to the Ring, the price of whose adhesion was a nomination to a seat on the bench of the Common Pleas, was a *protégé* of Terence Farley; but his history and characteristics will be referred to more at length hereafter. The minor municipal offices were apportioned at the pleasure of the magnates of both factions among their followers, and quiet within the Democracy was now restored: it was not, however, a pleasant quiet; it resembled too closely that which in a menagerie follows the hour of feeding. The hungry politicians, instead of clutching at each other's throats, now crunched and mumbled their spoils with greedy relish; but their appetite for plunder soon revived, and, to satisfy it, their leaders were forced to make new drains upon the public purse.

As the "Leader" remarked in mentioning Tweed's selection as chairman of the General Committee, honors were being thrust on "our friend Tweed" from every side. A greater piece of good fortune, however, now fell to him. This was his appointment as Deputy, with \$5,000 salary, by the Street Commissioner, Charles G. Cornell, who had been elected State Senator, and who gladly relinquished all the duties of the office to him. The latter now had his Supervisorship and his duties as Fire Commissioner to look after, as well as those of his new position, and it might fairly be supposed that his time was

fully occupied. His remarkable administrative talent, however, enabled him to despatch business with wonderful ease. He soon had the Street Department completely under his control, and developed in it a system of management remarkable not less for its simplicity than for the advantages which inured to himself personally under its operation. The patronage of this department was unequalled. Owing to the rapid growth of the city, scores of new streets were required, and in opening and completing these, putting in sewers, repairing wharves and piers, roads, public buildings, etc., a host of laborers were employed. During 1863 the outlay in the Street Department for salaries was \$96,105; for wharves and piers, \$158,043; for repairing and cleaning streets, \$101,926; for roads and avenues, \$89,244; for opening new streets, \$10,735; for public buildings, \$132,179; for contingencies, \$12,932; and for Belgian pavement, \$51,877; making a total of \$650,000. This large expenditure increased so rapidly under the lavish direction of Tweed that within four years the figures were quadrupled. It was an easy thing for the Deputy to farm out work to those who would pay him the highest percentage, and no city contractor dared refuse a position to a friend of Tweed, however incompetent he might be. Thus the latter at once lined his own pockets and rewarded his henchmen. He even became so bold as to demand that his friends should be employed by the heads of the other city departments. Under this system the city pay-roll rapidly increased in length. The following were some of the entries upon it: Twenty-five court and office cleaners, total pay, \$7,165; sixty-eight court attendants, each \$800. All these were appointed by the Board of Supervisors, of which Tweed was president. Twelve deputy tax commissioners, and seventeen clerks to the same, the former with \$2,000 a year and the latter with salaries of from \$700 to \$1,200; a number of office boys, each \$520; fourteen court attendants, each \$800; ninety health officers at \$2.50 and \$3.00 per day; twenty-two distributors of corporation ordinances, total pay, \$13,992; twenty park-keepers, total, \$6,510; ten extra tax-clerks, total, \$3,760; seventeen market-clerks with pay from \$547 to \$1,500; twelve manure-inspectors, total, \$11,268. Altogether the pay-roll for 1863 –

64 contains, exclusive of the police and public school-teachers, over twelve hundred names, while the total expenditure by the Comptroller for salaries during the year 1863 was \$728,000. Many of these were sinecure places, while in none of them was the work onerous. Some of the office-holders were quite ignorant of their duties, but they were none the less perfectly content to draw their pay regularly without troubling themselves at all on that score.

Tweed with his vast patronage had now no rival in influence; Sweeny, whose sagacious counsels had become indispensable to his associates, ranked next in importance. Neither Hall nor Connolly, however, had yet taken the influential positions which they afterwards acquired. Thus, though the various characters who subsequently composed the inner Ring had not yet fully assumed their ultimate parts, they were now all upon the stage together. In the capture of Tammany, the last obstacle in the way of final operations had been removed, or, rather, the single organization capable of offering any effective resistance had been secured. The field was now perfectly prepared for all that was to follow; the body politic was thoroughly honeycombed with corruption. Experience has uniformly shown that in all struggles between prerogative and privilege the most formidable muniments of popular liberties are found, not in the regular machinery of the government, but in those informal organizations which grow up around it. This fact was strikingly illustrated in the present case. Firmly intrenched in every department of the government, the downfall of the Ring was the work of the press and of the bar. During its rise, however, it encountered little or no opposition from either of these quarters; both had, indeed, experienced the influence of its subtle and poisonous touch. This was curiously illustrated in the case of the "New York Herald," — the sheet which probably has the largest circulation and influence among the class to which Tweed and his associates looked for support. The "Herald" had announced, in the early months of 1863, that the glory of the old wigwam had departed. It continued to laud the Mozart at the expense of the Tammany faction for some time longer, making free use of its usual weapons of vulgar sarcasm

and slang badinage. In August of that year, however, it turned a characteristic somersault, and, harlequin-like, now began to mock and gibe at the other party to the conflict. In a leading article, Bennett complained that some brother editor had asserted that the "Herald" had at last done justice to Tammany Hall; whereas, he continued, "we trust that we have always done that to Tammany, Mozart, Oakey, and every other Hall." A few days later Benjamin Wood was summarily characterized in the same columns as a "blockhead," and Tammany was instigated to a more vigorous policy. This change of base may probably be credited to the dexterous manipulation of Oakey Hall. The elder Bennett was much too shrewd not to perceive the real nature of the new political combination; but it was always his policy to side with the strongest, and he now saw clearly enough that in the end Tammany would win. Owing to his enfeebled health, his son had become the responsible editor of the paper; and, through Hall's personal influence upon him, the "Herald" was brought into the support of the Ring. Young Bennett, like his father, was not to be bought with money; but flattery and attention accomplished what bribery could not. To please him, Hall appointed Gunning Bedford an Assistant District Attorney, and in 1868 this sample of semi-respectable mediocrity was nominated to a judgeship. Numerous other little acts of attention were performed, such as detailing a special policeman to protect the Bennett mansion on Washington Heights; they were trifles, it is true, but they pleased, and in return for them the "Herald" became the champion of the Ring.

Among the other leading papers, the "Tribune" and the "Times" denounced the municipal corruption and misrule in language sufficiently unsparing, which was fairly sustained by the "Evening Post." But Mr. Greeley was but an indifferent judge of men, and the trail of the corporation advertising was quite perceptible over the columns of the "Post." Whatever appeared in these papers, also, was attributed to the spirit of partisan warfare, and was productive of small results. The "World," on the other hand, preserved a position of neutrality, and preferred to lay the blame of everything at the

door of "radical legislation." The attention of those editing these papers was, however, mainly occupied by national affairs, nor, indeed, even had they desired to do so, could they have excited anything more than a languid or spasmodic interest in municipal matters.

Meanwhile the "Leader" was the organ of the 'Ring. Each week it distributed praise or blame to those within the fold, as a school-dame rewards or punishes her pupils. Sweeny, whose hand was on the lever of the machine, but who courted obscurity, was not mentioned at all. Connolly and Hall were spoken of but seldom; but Tweed, who was the Ring figure-head, was praised lavishly, as also was Barnard. The former was styled "the recognized leader of New York Democracy, . . . a distinction he had won by patient industry, steady perseverance in right, and self-sacrifices ennobling as they were characteristic." Barnard, it was declared, "has worn the ermine with that grace and dignity which has made him an honor to the judiciary of the State"; while at another time he was commended for the good work he had done "in securing to each man his rights as a citizen," while he was described as "a young man imbued with the spirit of progress and untrammelled by the conventionalities of custom or the dictates of extreme partisanship." This puffery, absurd as it now seems, was not without its effect; and, until the great explosion actually took place, the number was continually increasing of those, even among respectable men, who hugged themselves with the fond delusion that after all the Devil was not so black as he was painted.

The deterioration of the bar had not been so great as that of the bench, but nevertheless it had been sufficiently complete to wholly neutralize its action through a long period of time. The formation of the Bar Association was one of the good results which flowed from the Ring supremacy. Before that was formed in February, 1870, there was no organization of the legal profession. A few men, among whom an honorable prominence is due to James T. Brady, were bold enough to denounce in ringing terms that growing corruption of which all were cognizant. Others were simply timid and subservient, floating easily with the tide, and always consoling themselves with the

reflection that they were no worse than the rest of the world. Between these two classes, however, altogether too many adopted that most contemptible of all codes of ethics, which greedily accepts the bribe, and then attempts to pettifog responsibility onto the spirit of the times. A most glaring example of this at once suggests itself in the case of David Dudley Field. The scandal excited by his course, and the amused indignation occasioned by the singular defence attempted of him and his patron, Judge Barnard, by Mr. George Ticknor Curtis, have already sufficiently occupied the attention of the public and the space of this Review.* They will constitute a part, both permanent and prominent, of this extraordinary and discreditable history. Perhaps, however, a sufficient idea of the almost utter demoralization which now pervaded the New York bar may best be derived from the following extract from a memorable speech of James T. Brady, delivered at the Cooper Institute, in November, 1863 : —

“Such a change has occurred in the administration of justice in this city, that when a man walks into my office with a bundle of papers, and says to me : ‘Mr. Brady, here is an injunction from a judge to prevent my carrying on my regular business,’ and, in one of the very last cases that I tried, there was an injunction to prevent a man from continuing to act as the foreman and cutter in a merchant tailoring establishment in this city, — an injunction from a judge to prevent him from carrying on his lawful trade for the maintenance of his family. How do you think I received those papers? When I first entered the profession, I would never have asked what judge granted it, but I would have looked at the merits of the case, and tried to tell my client what I thought. But, gentlemen, the question before even looking at one word written upon that paper, was, ‘What judge granted this injunction?’ Next, ‘What judge is to hear this case?’ And when the latter question was answered, in many cases I have handed the papers back and told my friend, ‘I can be of no service to you : you must employ such a person, between whom and the judge, or judge’s partner, friend, agent, or huckster, there exists a great affection ; employ him and you will have some chance to maintain your rights in a court of justice.’ Is this any fancy picture? It is the language of the most sober and dreadful reality.”

* North American Review, No. CCXXIV. p. 56, No. CCXXXI. pp. 284, 392-421.

Mr. Brady's statement was not contradicted at the time, and it has been since confirmed to the letter.

Who the "partners, friends, agents, or hucksters" referred to by Mr. Brady were, is now well known. Barnard himself, in a moment of happy inspiration, christened them with a title which they will always retain. In a case before him, where it was necessary to appoint a referee, the name of Gratz Nathan, a nephew and favorite referee of his associate, Judge Cardozo, was suggested, when Barnard violently interrupted, and said, "Put down James H. Coleman; he is my 'Gratz'!"

So far as the courts of law themselves were concerned, that quarter was the very last from which the incipient Ring had any danger to apprehend. The judiciary of New York City was already hopelessly corrupted. In view of what has already been said in the Review on this subject, it would be a mere waste of room to again go over the natural and gradual process through which this result has come about.* In connection with the transactions to which this paper relates, three men, however, enjoy a peculiar prominence as the "Ring Judges." These were George G. Barnard, Albert Cardozo, and John H. McCunn, — names which will long be remembered in the records of judicial infamy. They were all men of originality, and had severally exhibited peculiar traits of character. Barnard's career was, indeed, even full of romance. Born in Poughkeepsie, New York, of good family, and a graduate of Yale College, he had among his classmates Judge Sandford of Connecticut, and Walter W. Phelps, the brilliant young Congressman from New Jersey. After graduation he led a roving, desultory life, and finally wandered off to California. Here, according to one account, he was a gambling-house "stool-pigeon"; while, according to others, he at one time became so desperately impecunious as to perform with a negro minstrel troupe. Returning to New York, he betook himself to politics. He associated with the lowest class of "roughs," and by his vulgar "smartness" and audacity pushed himself forward, so that in 1858 he was elected Recorder. In this capacity he exhibited those native characteristics which afterwards made him notorious. He imitated his predecessor, Recorder Riker, and

* North American Review, No. CCXVI, July, 1867, pp. 148 — 176.

City Judge Russell, by occasionally imposing very severe sentences on criminals, and thus gained a fictitious reputation for judicial capacity. He was nominated to the Supreme Court, against the advice of all the judges, at a packed primary presided over by Tweed, and was elected without the support of a dozen respectable lawyers of any party. Yet his ambition coveted even higher judicial honors. In 1866, after making great professions of a desire to reform the municipal government, he sought and nearly obtained the signature of Governor Fenton to a bill giving him the right to hold the special term in chambers, exclusive of all the other judges. This bill, if it had become a law, would have placed in Barnard's hands enormous and wholly irresponsible power. Millions of property would have been subject to his disposal. He alone of all the bench would have been able to grant or dissolve injunctions, attachments, or orders of arrests; to appoint referees, and to issue writs of *mandamus*, etc. He would, in short, have been rendered irresponsible, except through a slow and doubtful process of impeachment; and it now seems inexplicable that such a scheme should have been even conceived, much less favored, by many far-sighted men, among whom were some of his bitterest assailants. Failing in this audacious attempt, Barnard contented himself by indulging on the bench in the most ill-natured and reckless displays of ignorance, vulgarity, and absence of personal dignity. His knowledge of law from books was so slight that his brother is said to have remarked, before his elevation to the bench, "George knows about as much law as a yellow dog." He supplied his deficiencies in this respect by quickness of perception and native shrewdness. Like the notorious Jeffries, Barnard had a keen, incisive mind, and when he chose to listen, he quickly grasped the pith of an argument or case. He gave prompt decisions, and, in spite of frequent unfairness, the bar was on the whole pleased with his despatch. Of a cooler nature, he was less violent than Jeffries, but their tastes were equally coarse. Both drank to excess and made free use of profane and vulgar language. Jeffries's demeanor on the bench was more overbearing and brutal, while Barnard was audaciously defiant and insolent. Lord Mansfield is said to have sat in eight hundred cases in one

ear, and Barnard was almost as rapid in the despatch of business. The pecuniary interests involved in his rulings were doubtless far greater than in those of the English Chief Justice, but Barnard rarely indulged in any discussion of those principles of law with which the name of the former is associated. But there is something ludicrous in even referring to the two in any connection. Barnard's friends claimed that he was a capable judge, because his decisions were rarely reversed by the Court of Appeals; but as many were not sustained in General Term and never reached that court, this reasoning seems not to be conclusive. The simple fact was that no man of keen natural faculties could sit and hear case after case argued by able counsel without learning a certain amount of law. Barnard was not only a man of keen natural faculties, but he was also gifted with an almost inconceivable assurance. He would accordingly sit upon the bench and discuss moot points with lawyers like Field, Evarts, or O'Connor, with all the coolness of an expert, and thus gave to the ignorant an edifying idea of his learning.

The keynote to his character was recklessness. He was not cowardly, and loved to defy public opinion and future consequences. He might perhaps best be compared to some of Bret Harte's California heroes, and if the gambler Outcast of Poker Flat had been made a judge, he would doubtless have closely resembled Barnard. He was licentious in his morals, coarse in language, and had a strong love for low company. His habits on the bench were all his own: he would drink brandy, or sit with his boots on the desk before him; but his favorite amusement was whittling, and it was one of the functions of the attendants of his court-room to keep on hand for consumption in this way a supply of pine sticks of a proper size and shape. He was a born gambler and an habitual frequenter of bar-rooms, but he was loyal to his friends and lavish with his money. He was also not without humor of a vulgar cast, which exhibited itself in his freak of wearing on all occasions an extraordinary white hat, and was probably the chief bond of sympathy between himself and the notorious James Fisk, Jr.

While Barnard by descent and characteristics was essentially

American, Albert Cardozo came of a mixed Portuguese and Hebrew stock. His family had for a time resided in South Carolina, and thence removed to New York, where about the year 1830 he was born. He entered Columbia College and took high rank as a student. Adopting the profession of law, he obtained a fair practice, and also formed the acquaintance of Fernando Wood, who probably recognized in him a useful tool if not a kindred spirit, and nominated him as judge of the Court of Common Pleas, delivering himself of some remarks on the occasion singularly illustrative of the depth of degradation into which the city bench had then fallen. Rarely has so young a man attained to such high judicial honor as fell to the lot of Cardozo. He had undoubted talent, however, and was far better qualified than Barnard for his position. In the first place he was a sedulous student, and well versed in the theory of his profession. Such of his opinions as were not influenced by partisanship were usually sound, and were expressed in clear and forcible language. These, however, were the exception, and Cardozo's whole career on the bench was marked by an utter disregard both of law and of right. His interference with the enforcement of the Excise Law was manifestly illegal, and a mere partisan bid for the support of the liquor-dealers. Like others of his Ring associates, he signed papers and issued orders without investigating their contents, and then excused himself from responsibility on the ground that he had been assured that there was nothing wrong in them. That as a judge he was thoroughly venal, and stood ready to sell law as a grocer might sugar, as will hereafter be seen, has been fully demonstrated. He was intensely ambitious. His darling dream was to secure a seat on the bench of the Supreme Court of the United States, and in the hope of doing this he sacrificed everything in the service of the Ring. Cardozo's personal appearance was peculiar and striking. He had a slender lithe figure, an active springing step, and the bearing of a gentleman. His features had a slight Hebrew cast; his face was beardless and his complexion almost livid; he wore long, thick curly hair; but his eye was his most marked feature. It was black, piercing, and ever alert. A bitter opponent once said that he had the eyes of a serpent

looking from the face of a corpse, and the description was not unhappy. He dressed simply. His manner was courteous but inflexible. He never lost his self-possession, but beneath his calm exterior was a heart the resentments of which were implacable. He lived quietly, going but little into society, and his domestic relations were free from taint.

If Barnard was essentially an American, and Cardozo not less essentially a Jew, McCunn was a typical Irishman,—noisy, bragging, blatant. He obtained his position on the bench in 1861, through the friendship of Fernando Wood's brother Benjamin, of lottery notoriety, and he superseded Judge Bosworth in 1863. His knowledge of law was even less than Barnard's. He was, however, cunning enough to employ capable advisers, and many of his opinions were written by Roger A. Pryor, who was then trying to get into practice in New York. In one or two instances where McCunn differed from his colleagues on the bench, he was sustained by the Court of Appeals, to the surprise of every one. He was not so courageous as Barnard, but he displayed, if possible, even greater effrontery. He was shamelessly corrupt, and though outwardly good-natured and even jovial, he was treacherous at heart, and sold his clients' secrets to opposing counsel. He persuaded a near relative to transfer property to him, and then asserted his title to it, and dispossessed him even of his house. Yet, in spite of these traits of character, McCunn could talk so smoothly and act the whole-souled Irishman so well, that he deceived respectable men into thinking him honest and desirous of improving himself. In his personal appearance and when in repose he was quite striking, and an anecdote is told of some eminent foreigner who, at a public entertainment, expressed the greatest curiosity to know something of "that remarkable-looking man with the head like St. Just." The tourist's faith in craniology is supposed not to have survived the shock.

But one more character remains to be referred to, and this preliminary gallery of familiar portraits will be complete. It will be remembered that where this article some pages back diverged into the description of the Ring judges, the various gentlemen who desired to assume the management of the municipal affairs of New York had, after much wrangling and

futile negotiation, finally patched up a hollow truce, the silence of which boded ill for the devoted city. This period of calm was then likened to that which is commonly observed to follow a division of food among a collection of caged beasts of prey. The process of deglutition over, the carnivorous propensities of these animals are apt speedily to reassert themselves. It was so in the present case with the city politicians. The contest between Tammany and Mozart revived, and "Mephistopheles-Micawber" once again prepared to disturb their sunny hunting-grounds and to prove himself a very thorn in the flesh of the sachems of Tammany. In 1865 Fernando Wood, without success, raised the old question at the State convention, whether Mozart or Tammany was the regular party organization. He then strove to unite the two factions in his support for the Mayoralty; but though the reputation of Tammany was at a low ebb, owing to the scandal created by the revelations of the Citizens' Association, and perhaps, indeed, for that very reason, it refused to affiliate with Wood. On the contrary, it nominated for Mayor John T. Hoffman, who had won great popularity by his firmness, as Recorder, in punishing the draft rioters of 1863. Hoffman, therefore, now loomed up into importance as one of the Ring respectabilities, — a species of figure-head, indeed, in matters of "deportment," in which capacity, and until the downfall of his associates, he certainly evinced very considerable abilities, and nourished a lofty ambition. As his name indicates, he was of German extraction. His family lived at Sing Sing, N. Y., and prior to his election as Recorder he was a member of a respectable law firm in New York. He had taken an interest in politics from early life, speaking frequently in political campaigns and at Fourth of July celebrations. His first connection with municipal affairs was in 1854, when he became an active member of the Young Men's Tammany Hall General Committee. In 1859 he joined the Tammany Society, and presently became a member of the General Committee. He kept aloof from the squabbles which tormented the Society, nor did he become prominent before the date of the Mozart Hall secession. In 1859 he was an unsuccessful applicant for the appointment of the United States District Attorney, but the following year he was elected Recorder by a handsome majority.

Hoffman was not a brilliant man, but he had ability, personal dignity, and resolution. He was ambitious, and though he was himself superior to mercenary considerations, he was not unwilling to shut his eyes to wrong-doing as the price of fame and position. "For the glory of sitting on the money-bags he would let others rob the treasury." He was elected Mayor by a large majority. His first notable act in this office was to veto the appropriation of \$57,000 for the Corporation Manual, but his veto was overridden by the Common Council. Subsequently, in April, he vetoed two schemes aimed at the city treasury, — one granting an extra allowance to a contractor, and the other authorizing a retired city inspector to continue in the occupation of rooms rented by the city, and to keep an indefinite number of clerks for an indefinite period to accomplish the unfinished business of his department. The power of the Ring, however, was so great, and the Mayor was so hampered by provoking legislative safeguards, that it would have been hard even for one not blinded by ambition to stem the rising tide of corruption which flooded in from every side. In his case, also, the prize of the governorship was ever dangled before his eyes, and obscured his vision.

In July, 1866, his name was brought forward in connection with that office, and he was nominated at the Democratic State Convention, after an unusually long ballot. He made numerous speeches during the canvass, in which he mainly discussed national topics. He denounced the Registry Law at length, for its injustice to foreigners ; and thus, as well as by a letter to President Johnson regarding the Fenian invaders of Canada, made a bid for the Irish vote. He also denounced the Commissions, and referred casually to the wasteful expenditure of public money in the city. He was defeated, partly, it is alleged, owing to frauds perpetrated by the Republicans, but more probably because he was not well known to voters outside of New York City. Its failure in this caucus stimulated the Ring to extraordinary energy in the election two years later. This was the Presidential canvass in which Grant was opposed by Seymour. The "Leader," in a five-column double-leaded article, entitled "Save the Republic," vigorously insisted upon the necessity of making every exertion to secure

a Democratic victory both in State and city. Among other things, vast preparations were made for a mammoth torch-light procession and mass meeting in October, and a large attendance was secured by the offer of a silken banner to the ward having the fullest representation. The arrangement of the procession was intrusted to Mr. Andrew J. Garvey, who was highly commended by the "Leader," both before and after the parade, for his "unsurpassed skill and experience in matters of this kind." When the procession reached Tammany Hall, marshalled by Garvey, who carried a richly carved baton, Oakey Hall was in ecstasies, and almost embraced this "jewel of a grand marshal," as he called the subsequently famous contractor, whom the Ring and its organ, for reasons hereafter to appear, felt impelled at this juncture to court and flatter as much as possible.

The corruption of the city executive and judiciary was now fairly eclipsed by that of its ballot-box. Tweed and his associates were resolved to carry the local elections by fair means or by foul. Under their unscrupulous manipulation false registration, repeating and falsification of election returns, were developed into a science. Their proceedings were simply amazing. The process through which the city politicians drew around them an army of unscrupulous followers, dependent upon the public purse and ready for any service, has already been described. From this material bands of organized repeaters were now formed, led by Mike Norton, "Jimmy" O'Brien, Reddy the Blacksmith, Florence Scannel, and other hardly less notorious individuals. In the days of the old fire department these gangs would rendezvous in the engine-houses, and thence proceed to the polls, and it was evidence of this fact which in great degree caused the breaking up of the volunteer system. Election frauds had long been charged on each other by the political parties in New York City, and, indeed, there is some reason to suppose that through their agency the defeat of Henry Clay was brought about in the Presidential election of 1844. Governor King, in his first annual message, in 1857, in referring to the "elective franchise," said: "All know that in the city of New York, and measurably in other large cities, it is not pure, and often not free." And again, in March,

1858, a select committee reported to the Assembly, that "of late years frauds and simulation at the ballot-box have become extensive and enormous." In view of this great and growing abuse, the Legislature of the State finally enacted the Registry Laws of May 13, 1865, and April 25, 1866. These, however, wholly failed to accomplish the object for which they were designed. False voting increased with each election. It was large in 1866, but in 1868 it reached a hideous climax. In the earlier days party leaders were satisfied with repeating; then wholesale naturalization by the courts began; and finally, when this proved inadequate for the exigency, partisan inspectors were appointed, who did away with the necessity of repeating by manufacturing the returns to order.

On the 6th of October, 1868, wholesale naturalization was begun on a scale hitherto not imagined. The Supreme Court, for the first time in its history, engaged in this work, which had previously devolved wholly on the Court of Common Pleas and Superior Court. No less than 105,000 blank applications for and 69,000 certificates of naturalization were ordered to be printed by the New York Printing Company for the Superior and Supreme Courts, besides "several thousand" blanks supplied for various committees and officers established by Tammany Hall. In the Supreme Court Barnard alone heard applications for naturalization; in the Superior Court McCunn was more or less assisted by his associates. McCunn was, however, most remarkable for the indecent haste with which he examined applicants and issued certificates to them. He sat on the bench longer than the usual court hours, in one case remaining until midnight. Of the 17,572 applicants in this court he allowed eight ninths. The daily average from October 5 to October 23 was 1,415, while for several days respectively the number ordered to be passed was 2,109, 1,868, 1,856, 1,842, 1,760. Barnard held his court nominally from seven to nine o'clock in the evening, but the sessions ran up to ten and even eleven o'clock. Experienced judges stated that it was rapid work to naturalize twelve men in an hour, yet McCunn declared that he could examine two applicants in a minute, while Barnard made citizens by platoons. The average number naturalized each year in the Common Pleas, from 1856 to 1867 inclusive,

was 5,252, and in the Superior Court 3,955, or a total annual average of 9,207. The highest number in any one of these years in both of these courts, prior to 1865, was 16,493 in 1856. Yet in 1868 there were naturalized in the Common Pleas 3,145, in the Superior Court 27,897, and in the Supreme Court 10,070, making a total of 41,112, — more than four times the previous annual average. These figures, moreover, only include such cases as were registered; the actual number was doubtless much larger. It was pretended that this extraordinary increase was due to the fact that many aliens took out their papers at this time who had neglected to do so during the Rebellion, from the fear of being thereby rendered liable to compulsory military service under the draft. The figures of the Presidential election of 1864, however, do not exhibit any diminution from previous years, to indicate that aliens were deterred from naturalization by that consideration.

Not only was the number of the naturalizations effected enormous, but the manner in which the applicants were passed was scandalous and fraudulent. They, with their witnesses, were repeatedly sworn in groups, without any separate examination. In one instance thirteen, and in another fifteen, men were naturalized in five minutes. Certificates were procured for persons who did not appear in court, while professional witnesses vouched for every doubtful applicant. The proceedings were not even public, but in many instances the doors were closed, or the court-room was so crowded that it was impossible to get within hearing distance of the judge. On several occasions spectators were forcibly ejected from the court-room. Certificates were also issued in large quantities under fictitious names, for the use of repeaters; thousands of these were sent broadcast throughout the city and State. Many certificates were issued to professed minors, to avoid the previous "declaration of intentions" which is necessary in other cases. Out of 10,093 naturalizations in the Supreme Court, 9,711 were of this character. In the Superior Court 13,541 out of 17,572 applicants were minors. The evidence in other courts shows that about sixty per cent of "minor applications" is a legitimate proportion, so that in both the Supreme and Superior Courts heavy frauds were perpetrated in this way. The next

step was the development of false registration upon an equally large scale.

In New York City there are 22 wards, which during the control of the Ring were divided into 340 election districts. The law provides for four inspectors of registry and election in each district. These, aided by two poll-clerks, sit for one day three weeks prior to the election, or two days if the number of voters in the district exceeds 400, and again on the Friday and Saturday immediately preceding the election, to register the names and residences of voters appearing for that purpose. No one, unless so registered, can lawfully vote. At the election these inspectors receive the ballots from the voters, and deposit them in the proper ballot-boxes. The names and residences of those voting are recorded by the poll-clerks on poll-lists, and when the polls are closed the ballot-boxes are delivered over to two canvassers, who canvass or count the ballots, which should by law exactly tally in number with the names recorded on the poll-lists. The result of the canvass is announced and certified by the canvassers, and their returns are finally passed upon by the Board of Supervisors sitting as a county board of canvassers. Persons claiming the right to be registered and to vote may be challenged, and in this case their right to registry is decided upon by a majority of the inspectors. These restrictions certainly have the appearance of being sufficiently rigid to secure a reasonable purity of the ballot. In operation they only demonstrated how utterly futile all restrictive laws are in presence of a debauched public opinion. The plan now devised to wholly evade the operation of the registry was brutal in its directness and simplicity.

Headquarters were established in the different wards, and duplicate lists of fictitious names were made out, in which a number and a street were set down opposite each name. Two days before the election, gangs of men assembled at these headquarters and were called off, each receiving one of these names. They then, under leaders who in many cases were notorious thieves, went in small or large parties, and registered repeatedly. On election day the same set of men, after being stimulated by drink, were led to the polls at the places where

they had registered, and voted "early and often"; occasionally exchanging coats and hats, more in jest than to avoid recognition. Six men were registered from Tweed's house, nine from that of Justice Shandley, and thirteen from that of Coroner Keenan. The actual number of residents in the three dwellings was eight. From the Compton House, a second-class hotel in Third Avenue, 152 persons were registered, and 94 voted. From the house of George Thompson, a member of the Democratic General Committee, 35 persons were registered, and 23 voted. Besides these instances, there were false registrations from the houses of other well-known persons respectively, as follows: Senator Michael Norton, 30; Peter Norton, his brother, 24; Alderman John Cox, 25; Alderman Isaac Robinson, 20; Michael Sharkey, 20; Peter Burns, 13; Assemblyman Peter Mitchell, 15.

In the twenty-first ward, the home of Sheriff O'Brien, an extraordinary state of affairs existed. Though this ward had 6,812 Democratic to offset 1,399 Republican voters, yet hundreds of repeaters were lodged and fed in it, free of expense, by O'Brien, on election day, and three or four hundred deputy-sheriffs were actually sent to this locality to prevent the former from being interfered with. O'Brien, indeed, appointed some two thousand special deputies on the election day, purely on his own authority, and without a requisition from the Mayor, Governor, or the police authorities. Their orders were concise, — to arrest any one who might attempt to interfere with voting. Many of them were men who had been convicted of crime, and all belonged to the order of "roughs." Besides the evidence of wholesale repeating educed by the discrepancy between the poll-lists and the registry, the number of naturalization papers issued to fictitious persons, and the disclosures of men who took part in repeating, additional proof of the colossal nature of the frauds perpetrated at this election is found in the excess of the vote cast above the entire actual voting population. Full evidence of this last fact is supplied by the Congressional Report on the New York Election Frauds of that year.* In this document the conclusion was reached that "the total fraudulent and illegal votes cast in the State of New York at

* House Documents, 40th Congress, 3d Session, Report No. 31.

the election in November, 1868, were not less than, and probably exceeded 50,000 votes."

Nor did these frauds stop here. Those who had the present "job" in hand were men who believed in thorough work, — they proposed this time to take a veritable bond of fate. It had been charged by the Democrats that in the gubernatorial election of 1866 the Republican managers withheld the returns from the country districts until they had received the vote in New York City, when they manipulated the former so as to offset the Democratic majority in the metropolis. Whether well founded or not, this belief probably suggested to the Tammany leaders the adoption of like tactics in the pending canvass. Immediately before the election, Oakey Hall, who was secretary of the Democratic State Committee, prepared and sent to the chairman of every county Democratic organization in the State the following secret circular : —

[Private and strictly confidential.]

ROOMS OF DEMOCRATIC STATE COMMITTEE,
October 27, 1868.

MY DEAR SIR, — Please at once to communicate with some reliable person in three or four principal towns, and in each city of your county, and request him (expense duly arranged for this end) to telegraph to Wm. M. Tweed, Tammany Hall, at the minute of closing the poll, — not waiting for a count, — such person's estimate of the vote. Let the telegraph be as follows : "This town will show a Democratic gain (or loss) over last year of ——" Or this one, if sufficiently certain : "This town will give a Republican or Democratic majority of ——".

There is of course an important object to be attained. By a simultaneous transmission at the hour of closing the poll, but not longer waiting, opportunity can be taken of the usual half-hour lull in telegraphic communication over lines before actual results begin to be declared, and before the Associated Press absorb the telegraph with returns and interfere with individual messages ; and give orders to watch carefully the count.

Very truly yours,

SAMUEL J. TILDEN, *Chairman.*

This circular, though purporting to be signed by Mr. Tilden, was prepared and issued without his knowledge. When Mr. Tilden heard of its existence, he protested at once

against such a use of his name, or the issue of the document itself. Mr. Hoffman also never saw or heard anything of the circular until it appeared in print. Another ingenious device suggested itself at this time to Hall's fertile mind. On October 28th a call was issued from the rooms of the Tammany Hall General Committee, requesting the Democratic canvassers of the city to meet at the hall on the Sunday before the election. Some three hundred and forty responded, who were advised by Oakey Hall in counting the votes to read over the name of every elector on every ticket, instead of simply counting each ticket as a unit without reading all the names on it, as had been the practice at former Presidential elections. Hall himself afterwards stated that one of his objects in doing this was to prolong the count as much as possible, so that the interior of the State could not hear of the progress of the voting in the city, as had been the case in former elections. These arrangements had the expected effect. More than two hundred telegrams were forwarded to the city in answer to Hall's circular, and early in the evening of the election day about one third of the State had been heard from. On the other hand, as a result of Hall's other suggestions, a delay of three hours was brought about in making up the city vote. This time was undoubtedly employed in manipulating the returns to suit the exigencies of the Tammany leaders. Oakey Hall subsequently explained that the object of the circular was "to get local estimates from our Democratic friends, with which to compare and check the returns as they came in." Its idea, he further said, was "not to perpetuate fraud, but to check fraud," and he added, "I wish to disavow the remotest intention, on our part, of in any way advising the canvassers in the city of New York as to the state of the country polls; and, as a matter of fact, I state that no one single canvasser in the city of New York knew what was the country poll, excepting as he may have heard it was announced at Tammany Hall or Cooper Institute." All of which will be accepted for exactly what it is worth. Meanwhile the decisive fact remains, that on this occasion the votes returned as cast in New York were eight per cent in excess of its entire voting population, and furnished a Democratic majority of 60,678, which sufficed to

promote Mayor Hoffman to the gubernatorial chair by a majority of exactly 10,000 in the entire State.

The transcendent interest taken in the national and State canvass had left, during its progress, little leisure for thought about the local elections which were to follow it. In case the Democratic candidate for Governor was victorious the office of Mayor would be vacant; yet, as Hoffman's term had not expired, it was uncertain whether a new election would be held, to choose a successor to him, or whether Coman, who as President of the Board of Aldermen had acted as Mayor during Hoffman's absence on electioneering tours, would, *ex officio*, succeed him. Coman, who was a type of the ordinary New York politician, had shown himself ready to aid any jobbery likely to benefit himself or his friends; but whether he was exactly the man the present exigencies called for in that place was not clear. When the existence of a vacancy was established, Sweeny was evidently in a condition of great mental perplexity, and even contemplated taking the office himself. Baffling feelers were continually put forth by the "Leader," pointing to different men. Finally Coman was roughly thrust aside, and the vacant Mayoralty was placed at the disposal of Mr. Oswald Ottendorfer, editor of the *Stadts Zeitung* newspaper, and himself enjoying great influence with the German voters of the city. The honor was declined by him, but when asked to mention some one who would be satisfactory to himself and the Teutonic element, he named A. Oakley Hall. This decided the matter. The spirit in which the selection was received by the leading journals was characteristic. The "Herald" commented upon it in the vein of coarse mockery which it loved to affect. But at this time Hall was a constant contributor to its columns, and on terms of close personal intimacy with its editor; it would not therefore be at all surprising if he were himself the author of the following effusion which greeted his own nomination: "It will be a refreshing novelty to have for Mayor of New York a strictly upright, honorable, capable man, and at the same time one who writes a drama or a farce with equal success, acts a part as well as most professionals on the stage, conducts the most difficult cases on the calendar, sings a good song, composes poetry by

the yard, makes an effective stump-speech, responds to a toast with remarkable eloquence and taste, mixes a lobster salad as well as Delmonico's head cook, smokes the best cigar in New York, respects old age, and admires youth, as poets and orators invariably do." The "Tribune," on the contrary, used the following out-spoken language in commenting on the candidate of the now triumphant Ring: "Mr. Hall is the most ambitious, reckless, and, in most respects, the most supple myrmidon of the Tammany Ring. For many years he has been the support of the thieves who have plundered the treasury. In his present office he has stood between robbery and justice. Instead of punishing the breakers of the law, he boasts that he has not executed the law." The nomination of Hall took place as announced, and his election followed in due order.

As the result of this election, to use the words of Samuel J. Tilden, "the Ring became completely organized and matured." The 1st of January, 1869, found it master of every department of the city, and of nearly every department of the State government. It controlled both Legislature and Common Council. Its adviser, Hoffman, sat in the Governor's chair at Albany, and its other adviser, Hall, sat in the Mayor's seat in New York. Sweeny was City Chamberlain; Tweed held the Department of Streets; Connolly had been advanced to the office of Comptroller. Barnard, Cardozo, and McCunn were secure upon the bench. A subsidized press and a demoralized bar stood ready to extenuate its every act before a too lenient public. Well might the Ring feel secure and prepare to reap the rich harvest of corruption. Its success had been complete, its power was vast, it seemed protected from assault on every side. The vast city, rich with plunder, lay helpless at its feet.

Yet, even in the hour of triumph, there was an ominous foreshadowing of disaster. O'Brien, who had rendered invaluable service during the election, had just before been made Sheriff. His ambition, however, was not satisfied with this elevation, while a growing sense of importance made him not indisposed to rebel. Soon after the election a leading Republican politician met Sweeny, and, after interchanging a few words with him, said, "You have made an awful blunder

in putting in O'Brien as Sheriff; mark my words, he will ruin you all." "Well," replied Sweeny, apologetically, "we had to take him or the Big Judge" (Connolly). "Very true" was the rejoinder; "but the Big Judge don't amount to anything, you could turn him out of doors every day in the week. O'Brien is made of different stuff, as you will find out when he begins to tackle you." The utterance was prophetic.

CHARLES F. WINGATE.

ART. VI.—CRITICAL NOTICES.

- 1.—*A History of American Currency, with Chapters on the English Bank Restriction and Austrian Paper Money.* By WILLIAM G. SUMNER, Professor of Political and Social Science in Yale College. To which is appended "The Bullion Report." New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1874.

THE field of financial history of which Professor Sumner has undertaken to present a sketch is well known to students as being astonishingly rich in materials, and fruitful of cases profitable for warning or instruction. But it is broad, much of it has hardly been explored, its attractions have not been heightened by the skill of the writers who have dealt with it hitherto, and thus the general public have but a faint idea of its real importance. The fact that our own history proves by examples in a hundred different forms the futility of the latest theories about supplying the people with "cheap money," — that is, with a cheap substitute for money, — is one which the advocates of depreciated paper are not eager to keep before the public. The record is not a pleasant one for them to face. It shows the unsoundness of their principles and the breaks in their logic as exposed by the clear lights of experience. The record is annoying also, because it shows that their folly is, after all, stale folly, and has no more right to stand in the way of sober discussion in finance than the Ptolemaic system has in astronomy. The appeal to history is also a vexatious one for the "practical statesman" of to-day, because it is not an appeal to theory, but to fact; and it is on his obedience to "facts" and to "realities of every-day life," as distinguished from the "mere theory" of Mill and Ricardo and Tooke, that he chiefly prides himself.